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THE SCIENCE OF FOLK-LORE.



HAVE been asked to state this evening my views on the Science of Folk-Lore, and, as the subject is still under discussion, it seems to me that it should be understood that the opinions put forward by any particular person are his only, and it is with this limitation that I now wish to speak. What follows is meant to be merely the expression of my ideas for the time being, subject to modification as the discussion wears on—to be, in fact, a contribution to aid in solving the question this Society has taken up. I should here mention that my arguments will be chiefly illustrated by reference to Indian Folk-lore, because that is the branch of the subject with which I am best acquainted.

When we come to talk of *science* we must begin with definitions, and the first matter to be defined in this connection is naturally the term “Folk-lore.” What is Folk-lore, and what is not Folk-lore? These questions are not by any means easily answered, as I personally found when fixing on the headings under which to class the various contributions sent into *Panjâb Notes and Queries*. When an editor has to arrange a mass of miscellaneous paragraphs on various subjects connected with a land and its people, if he would avoid conveying to his readers a general sense of muddle, he must classify his information somehow. Music, Arts and Industries, Administration, Natural History, Botany, Geography, History, Antiquities, Numismatics, Bibliography, Ethnography, and Language, came naturally enough as distinct subjects. Then we have Religion, Social Customs, Songs and Catches, Proverbs and Sayings, and—shall we say it?—Folk-lore. Such an editor will soon find that Religion, so far as it is Superstition—and with many peoples it should be remembered that it is nothing else—is Folk-lore; so is a Social Custom, so far as it

is founded on a superstition ; while Songs and Catches, Proverbs and Sayings, are only interesting so far as they embody Folk-lore. History, Natural History, and Ethnography, are also Folk-lore, so far as they preserve Legends; Language, again, includes much, in the matter of derivation especially, that is purely Folk-lore : while Antiquities are almost inseparable from Legends. Folk-lore, in fact, is present in almost every subject connected with the study of mankind, and with many it is so mixed up with sober fact as to be practically inextricable. Careful as I have been to try and keep the Folk-lore notes in *Panjâb Notes and Queries* separate from the remaining subjects, I have found it quite impossible to do so altogether, and in some cases it has been so hard to say whether a certain scrap of information was about Religion or Folk-lore, that it has seemed to be of no consequence under which heading it was classed : it belonged equally to both.

What, then, is this Folk-lore that we find pervading everything human ? It seems to me that the answer is to be found in the term itself. As a specimen of the general conception of the meaning of the term, the last edition of Webster, quoting the late Archbishop Trench as its authority, says that it means "rural tales, legends, or superstitions." I think every one here will admit that this definition does not go nearly far enough. If we take "folk" to mean the general community, we get "folk-lore" to be the "lore" of the people. "Lore" means and has meant learning in general, but, putting aside derivations and past meanings—a proceeding to which each generation in all parts of the world has always asserted its right—I think it is fair to say that "lore" nowadays, and at any rate in this connection, is learning of the kind that is opposed to science, meaning by "science" ascertained knowledge. *Folk-lore, then, is, in the first place, popular learning, the embodiment, that is, of the popular ideas on all matters connected with man and his surroundings.* Unascertained knowledge is, of course, apt to be very wrong, and so much is this the case that we may take it, that where the popular interpretation of a fact is quite incorrect, the statement is pretty certain to be capable of classification under Folk-lore. A superstition, as being an unreasonable and excessive belief, is a fact of Folk-lore :

so is a legend as unfounded history, or a popular derivation as plausible but unwarranted etymology. I do not mean by this that every mistake in historical books is to be classed as a Folk-lore fact. It is essential that the error should be of the people, popular : that it should enter into the general belief in a popular sense. We may prove that the Princes were never murdered in the Tower, but the usual historical statement that they were would still stand as a misstatement, not as a folk-legend. We may prove to a moral certainty that Amy Robsart was never murdered, that Leicester never ill-treated her, that he publicly married her, that she was by no means a girl when she died, that Sir Richard Varley was in reality a most worthy country gentleman, and that the whole story as given by Scott is a fiction taken from a vindictive pamphlet issued by Leicester's enemies; and yet, though no part of it is accurate history, the story is not a folk-tale. At the same time, if the story of Queen Elizabeth and Raleigh's cloak can be shown to be the common property of the human race, it is worth investigation as a folk-tale.

“ The embodiment of the popular ideas on all matters connected with man and his surroundings,” the preliminary definition above arrived at from a dissection of the term “ Folk-lore,” is perhaps a little too wide. It is at any rate too long-winded, and I put forward the primary definition, *the popular explanation of observed facts*, as fairly satisfying all requirements and permitting us to differentiate between what is and what is not Folk-lore better than any other. I do not, however, think it possible to keep the boundary always quite distinct : a fact that need not distress us, for we are here in no greater difficulty than are the votaries of any other science. Who can tell precisely in every case where animal life ends and plant life begins? And who will under every circumstance distinguish between reason and instinct, or between the animate and inanimate world ?

The *fons et origo* of all Folk-lore is apparently the instinct of man to account for the facts that he observes round about him, and hence the particular form in which I have cast the initial definition of the term. Man observes a fact, and he at once sets about to explain it. This he does by instinct ; but the nature of his explanation depends upon his mental condition, and in arriving at it he is bound by

certain natural laws which I will endeavour to shadow forth presently. Critical acumen and that accurate explanation of facts, which is based on systematic study and observation, and which we now call scientific, has come very slowly to mankind:—to a great extent indeed in our days. It has arrived at its present condition point by point, as has everything else in the world; and the cruder the mind of the varieties of man all the world over, now and in times past, and the further from the scientific state, the rougher the explanation and the wilder the guesses at truth. It must be remembered that the scientific explanation of a phenomenon involves critical observation, which is itself the outcome of a long continued education; the power of logical deduction, which may be reckoned as being mainly absent from the average popular mind; and the faculty for extended application, which is to a great extent the distinguishing mark of a trained intellect. What chance then has the untutored savage, or indeed the uncultivated member of a civilized race, of arriving at a right conclusion about anything that comes within his ken? As a matter of fact, the stages of observation, collection and arrangement of facts, and argument thereon, are impossible to such an individual, and in common parlance he invariably jumps to his conclusions: not because he is too idle to do otherwise, but because he cannot help himself. Hence comes Folk-lore, not exactly the Folk-lore we now study,—for this is a growth with a long history of its own,—but Folk-lore as *the popular explanation of phenomena*.

Where the effect does not immediately follow the cause, or where the connection between cause and effect is not at once apparent, the popular mind cannot hit off the true explanation of the effect, except by accident, and hence it is that Folk-lore is to a great extent a permanent record, as well as a perpetuation, of popular errors. It must always be so. To take altogether modern phenomena. Will a savage or an Asiatic peasant, for instance, ever give the true reason for the movement of the trains on the railway that is being made through his lands? The motor will be a devil that sits in the engine, or the engine itself a panting spirit controlled by the driver; anything rather than the reality. So will the telegraph wires be a means of carrying letters, or be endowed with the power of communicating the

secrets of those living near them. It has always been so. From time immemorial eclipses have been caused by a monster that periodically eats up the sun and moon, and disgorges them again. A very large number of our Indian fellow-subjects of the Queen-Empress think so still.

There is a corollary to be attached to the above definition of Folk-lore, and the term *for the purpose of study* must be made to include the customs which arise out of it. These customs originate in that common sense which is so often ridiculed as the most uncommon nonsense. A demon or god, for the terms are in practice nearly synonymous, lives in one of the Indian fig-trees, as is clear to the natives from the perpetual trembling of its leaves: this much is the explanation of cause and effect. All demons or gods are capable of good and evil: this is anthropomorphism—man arguing down to himself. Therefore it is obvious that the demon or god must be propitiated by a gift: this is common sense underlaid by anthropomorphism. Hence the gifts to the tree, now a general religious custom. By similar stages we arrive at the equally universal Indian social custom of opprobriously naming children. Three children of doting parents die successively,—quite an ordinary occurrence among primitive people who let their little ones run naked and have no idea of caring for them, as we understand this matter,—and what causes it? Not want of care assuredly in their eyes, but the spirit that has taken a fancy to the babes, and acquired them for himself. How shall they avoid this in the future? “By cheating the spirit,” answers common sense, and so the next little boy is given a disgusting name, and dressed up as a girl until past childhood. I think the process by which custom grows out of myth is to be explained somewhat as above, though I would at this stage again remind my hearers that every social fact, as we now observe it, has a long history behind it, and that this must be first examined before its existence can be scientifically accounted for.

If the full definition, that *Folk-lore as an object of study is the popular explanation of observed facts and the customs arising therefrom*, is to stand, it must reasonably meet all circumstances, and separate, as sharply as may be, what is from what is not Folk-lore.

Let us proceed to put it to a few tests. Religion as being a belief in and reverence for God (or the gods), including the rites and ceremonies legitimately arising from such belief and reverence, is not Folk-lore ; but superstition and all the practices arising therefrom is. Thus the Muhammadan belief in Allah and Muhammad the Prophet of Allah, and all the legitimate rites and ceremonies connected with the worship of Allah, cannot be reckoned as Folk-lore ; but the popular story of the martyrdom of Hasan and Hussain and the miracle-play arising out of it are nothing else. The teaching and philosophy of Buddhism are not Folk-lore, nor are many of the modern ceremonies connected with that religion as such ; but the "Romantic Legend of Buddha," as Mr. Beale has called it, and the *Jâttakas* are purely so. Passing on to Social Customs, the matriarcat and the many curious remains of bygone necessities and times still to be found in the laws of inheritance through females, the levirate and other rules of barbarous marriage, and such customs as polyandry and exogamy and the survivals of marriage by capture, customs connected with births and deaths related to religion as distinguished from superstition, rules for tribal government and social intercourse, are not Folk-lore ; but all the thousand and one notions as to the habits and actions of spirits and supernatural things, and the practices arising out of the urgency of counteracting their influence, are Folk-lore *par excellence*. According to the definition, too, probably the whole subject of totemism, should be classed as Folk-lore. Turning to Ethnography, the distinction is not so easily upheld, but it is still, I think, clear enough. For instance, where in India a tribe of really low, and, in fact, lost origin, as far as its information about itself goes, erroneously claims—and this is a common occurrence—an honourable Râjpût descent, it deceives nobody, and the statement is not a fact of Folk-lore, any more than would a bogus family genealogy be in England ; but when it goes on, like the Gakkhars of the Hills near the Indus—those ancient Hindus who so bravely resisted Mahmûd of Ghaznî, and who were forcibly converted to Islâm not more than 500 or 600 years ago—to claim descent from the Kayânian Kings of Persia, and invent a story to prove it, then Folk-lore steps in and takes possession of the ground. In

the like manner the tendency of untutored nations is naturally towards the exaggeration of the terrors with which they invest persistent enemies in the past, and hence arises much ethnological Folk-lore—the monkey races and the Râkshasas of India, the ogres or Uigur Tâtârs of Europe, the Giaours (Jaurs) and Guebres (Gabrs) or fire-worshipping opponents of the early Arab conquerors of Persia. In the case of History and Geography, as long as sober facts are purported to be related, let the relation be as inaccurate as it may, there is no Folk-lore. Thus, however unfounded and capable of refutation Macaulay's version of the doings of Warren Hastings and Sir Elijah Impey may be, it is in no part Folk-lore; but when the natives of Bengal come to telling us that Nuncomar (Nand Kumâr) was a very holy man who was hung by the English by a golden chain on a gallows fixed in the middle of the Ganges in answer to his petition to the gods that he might die in the full possession of his faculties and in the act of prayer, they are repeating a true legend and Folk-lore is in the ascendant. The body of the Nawâb of Lohârû, who was hanged for encompassing the death of Mr. Fraser at Dehlî some fifty years since, no doubt swung round, as is related, after death to the direction of Mecca (Makkâ). This may be called a fact of history, but when you add, as the natives of Dehlî do, that this was *because* he was innocent and a martyr, you are repeating a fact of Folk-lore. The same reasoning applies to all matters connected with ancient remains and antiquities generally. To Language the definition seems to be peculiarly applicable. Men have long observed that words grow up around them and have a derivation one from another. Especially is this the case with familiar proper names of people and things; and in all climes the populace has invented derivations for appellatives, the real origin of which has been lost. In India the processes of folk-etymology are still a living force in guiding the popular fancy. The native mind has not at all yet reached the scientific stage, and, consequently, the most childish derivations are everywhere gravely asserted as reasonable origins for the forms of names. This happens, too, in quarters where such things are the least to be expected. In the *Panjâb Notes and Queries* I have collected a string of native derivations of tribal and caste names, which are purely imaginary,

from the *Settlement Report of Ambálá*, a solemn Government publication relating to the method of collecting the land revenue of the district, and consequently recording only the sober and useful facts regarding the people and their history, but many of these facts as detailed by the natives are pure Folk-lore. Colonel Yule, in the last of those monumental works which have given him so high a reputation, has provided us with a whole dictionary of terms in which folk-etymology appears; but throughout his *Glossary of Anglo-Indian Words* it seems to me that the Folk-lore is easily separable from the instances quoted of mistaken etymologies. Thus, whether or not it be right to ultimately derive the now well-known word "godown" from the Malay *gadong*, as some do, or from the Tamil *kidangu*, as others do, in any case those who may in the end be proved to be wrong merely occupy the place of one defeated in argument; but the concocter of such a term as "Hodson-Jobson" out of *Yá Hasan yá Hussain*, the popular cry at the Muhammadan festival of the Muharram, who applies it to the whole ceremony, is guilty of jumping to his conclusions in true folk-fashion. So is the user of such a name as "cow-itch" for the irritating Indian bean; since this term arises, as the result of striving after a meaning from the modern native name *kawach*, which is really a Prâkritic derivative, by a legitimate process of boiling-down, of the Sanskrit *kapi-kachchhâ*—i.e., monkey-itch; a meaning, by the way, that has escaped Colonel Yule. As regards Proverbs and Songs I need hardly say anything here, as I presume it to be admitted that Proverbs are the *memoria technica* of the ideas of the people, and that their Songs are the musical expression of the same. Folk-tales, where not exactly legends, I take to belong to the same category.

I fear the discussion on the definition of the term "Folk-lore" has taken rather a long time, but it is worth while to thrash out this point thoroughly, as everything that follows must depend on what we mean by the name of our subject. Let us now pass on to the "Science of Folk-lore," by which I suppose is meant the study of Folk-lore in the recognised scientific style. As to this I have already expressed my views elsewhere, and these, with your permission, I will reiterate now with modifications, since what is required on the present occa-

sion is a discourse as to the manner in which the Society should set about this study.

In all scientific research observation of the facts from which the deductions are to be made of course comes first, but this observation must be critical. It is of no sort of use to observe everything indiscriminately, for this leads to confusion. Only the facts of Folk-lore—in other words, the matters that fall within the definition of the term—are wanted; hence the primary importance of defining what Folk-lore is. If I may be permitted to do so I would here point out a danger to enthusiasts, for I presume we are all enthusiastic. It consists in overdoing the self-appointed task. The subject is so wide, the facts to be observed so many and so ubiquitous, and the interest, when once roused, rapidly becomes so keen, that we are all apt to observe too much. Too much soon includes rubbish, and then down comes our friend the critic. I say "friend" advisedly, howsoever too candid he may appear to be at the time with his cold advice to examine and go carefully. Dr. Westcott used to be fond of explaining to the boys at Harrow how it was that a modern *savant*, unlike his ancient prototype, could not learn all the sciences, by drawing a series of circles, one inside the other, representing respectively the various stages of knowledge attained by man during his progress on earth. A bright intellect could easily grasp, he used to say, all the knowledge that was contained in the small inner circle; a sound one could manage the next; an exceptional mind could master the third; but the fourth was beyond the power of man; and as for the large outer circle, including all modern science, one intelligence could attain to only a small portion of it. This was with reference to science generally; but without exaggeration one may say that so greatly has scientific knowledge increased of late that what is true of Science as a whole is also true of any particular branch of it. A man is indeed oftener right than wrong in confining his efforts to the elucidation of a portion only of a scientific subject. Another danger is in being disheartened at the rigid requirements of Science. Says a humble votary of Folk-lore: "It is of no use my doing anything; these scientific gentlemen want so much; and how am I to know whether my observations when made are of any use?" To such a question the

answer would be that the difficulty looks much greater than it is. The requirements are not in reality very difficult to understand, and when grasped fulfilment is almost instinctive. One can learn something here from school-children. Most boys in a well-taught school will correctly point out the verbs, adverbs and nouns in a sentence, though not one of them has ever understood, or is indeed ever likely to understand, the jumble of ideas that does duty in the school grammar for the definitions of these parts of speech. Definitions are in fact the most difficult of all points for a teacher to tackle, and are formidable to the student only in appearance, and that because, being so difficult, they are often clumsily expressed. Practically no one is too humble to observe a Folk-lore fact, and no fact is too trifling or commonplace to be worthy of record. What is an every-day occurrence of no import in your neighbourhood may be a new revelation to the student seeking for links—the existence of which he suspects—to complete the chain of his investigations. The moral of the argument is, that between the rashness that would grasp at everything and the timidity that would be led by the nose, there lies a golden mean dependent on individual judgment. In the conduct of a scientific study—it being a human affair—something must be left to discretion, and this is a matter that cannot be avoided.

Having decided on what we are to observe we come to the method of record. Here accuracy and attention to essential details are paramount considerations: it being constantly borne in mind that every fact collected is intended to be an item to be eventually brought into account. Unaccompanied by such details as time, place, and nationality of currency and its history, where such is known, the bare statement of a fact is not of much use; while so to record it as to make it unfitted for collation is a mere waste of time. It is of great importance, too, that the collection should be systematically made. Not long ago a little book was published, by my friend Mr. Man, on the Andamanese Islanders, which is a reprint of papers read before the Anthropological Institute, and which is to my mind a model of what a systematic record should be. In it Mr. Man goes through his subject steadily point by point until he has given us a complete view of the savages he has studied. Commencing with their physical

characteristics he passes on to their mental capacities, their tribal distribution, social customs, habits and folk-lore. He next considers their language, ceremonies, superstitions and religious beliefs, and then their social relations, personal habits, trade, arts, and manufactures. This enumeration of the heads of his monograph gives them in but the merest outline: the details are worthy of consideration. They are, however, all to be found elsewhere in a more complete form, for the basis of his work is a skeleton plan drawn up under the auspices of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, called a *Manual of Anthropological Notes and Queries*. A similar guide-book for the use of travellers has been compiled by the Royal Geographical Society. This shows the feasibility of one of the most useful practical duties this Society could undertake, *viz. the preparation by committees of standard manuals*, showing under each branch of the subject what kind of facts it is desirable to collect, in what order they should be recorded, and how they should be classified. In matters of this kind the most experienced of us ought not to disdain the collective advice of his fellow-students, and to the inexperienced such guides would be invaluable. I do not think we could inculcate too persistently the importance of being systematic in our joint labours, for though it is all capable of being made to work out in one direction, there is a vast mass of multifarious matter to be collected, arranged and sifted, and the natural tendency is towards an aimless aggregation of details. This must lead to hopeless confusion unless checked, and as it is sure to perpetually exist, it must always be guarded against.

If we act rightly as to these two points the remainder of the work may be in a great measure left to take care of itself. In the matter of induction those who undertake to reason on the facts collected, and thus to explain the general principles which underlie the phenomena observed, become *ipso facto* teachers; and I think it will be admitted that such persons should be left to go their own way, that the soundness of their doctrines should be the only ground on which these should eventually stand or fall, and that no attempt should be made to coerce them into a particular style of argument. At the same time it is within the right of every student to put forward his views as to the method which should be adopted, and it is in the exercise of

this right that I ask you to listen for a few moments to my ideas on this point. The basis of my argument is that every thing in this world as we now find it,—or indeed since man has been able at any time to find it—has a history, and that to attempt to explain any phenomenon, using the term in its strict sense of something that meets the eye, by any process that does not involve examination of such history, is unsafe, and therefore unscientific. The Max Müllerian Theory of Comparative Mythology, as the latest number of *Mélusine* calls it, has been hotly opposed for some time past, and many hard things have been said of it, but to my mind the overwhelming argument against it is, that it is not scientific. It does precisely what it should not. It jumps to its conclusions, ignores history, deduces its facts from theory, and does not induce its theory from the facts. As some at any rate of those present will know, I have been for some time past engaged in unearthing all that can be ascertained regarding Râjâ Rasâlû, the King Arthur of the Panjâb. To my surprise about two years ago I found that in the *Westminster Review* a mythologist had duly appropriated the hero as a solar myth. No one at all acquainted with the Science of Comparative Mythology could, the article said, for a moment doubt it. The roots of this strongly-worded belief were fixed in certain tales about Rasâlû, which had been published by Mr. Swynnerton, and which had made the hero out to be a wanderer on the earth, who fought tremendous battles against the giants and conquered them. He was, moreover, a “fatal child,” *i.e.*, one destined to injure his parents, and is what is in India known as a “Zindâ Pîr,” a holy personage expected to appear again on the earth; and, lastly, he had a wonderful horse. This set the writer thinking about Indra, Woden, Sisyphus, Hercules, Sampson, Apollo, Theseus, Arthur, Tristram, Perseus, Œdipus, Phaethon, Orpheus, Amphion, Pan, and others, and on certain points in the legends of such personages, which led him to the conclusion that the whole lot, including Rasâlû, were elemental myths of some sort or other. Now I venture to submit that it is capable of historical proof that Rasâlû was a popular leader on to whose name has been hung, as a convenient peg, much of the floating folk-lore of the Panjâb. At any rate I hope to show conclusively before my volumes on the legends of the Panjâb have

come to an end that the particular tale, which went to prove beyond doubt in the mind of our Comparative Mythologist that Rasâlû was a solar myth, are by no means confined to that hero, but are the general property of the heroes of India, told of this one or that as occasion arises. They are, moreover, as regards Rasâlû himself, to a great extent only one local version out of many of his story. If this Westminster reviewer did not jump to his conclusions, I should like to know what to say of his method of reasoning? In forming a judgment on such views as he expresses we should not allow any display of learning to dazzle us into concurrence. Doubtless the outside scientific public does not do so. Erudition is knowledge culled from literature, and is not science, which is knowledge derived from the proper investigation of facts; and so the most learned of disquisitions may not be in the least degree scientific. That the works of the philological school of Comparative Mythologists are learned enough there is no doubt, but to call Comparative Mythology, as they understand it, a science, is, I submit, to use a misnomer. Much of their method is indeed empiricism *in excelsis*. The Science of Folk-lore should include Comparative Mythology, but I would warn the members of this Society, that if the notion gets abroad that they are mere *dilettanti*, from whose labours nothing solid is to be expected, it will take a long while to eradicate it; and that if they once allow—as have the Comparative Mythologists—the scientific world to consider their methods haphazard, they will bring upon their works a contempt which will not be altogether undeserved.

It will have been observed by students that the Comparative Mythologists have held the peasantry of all ages to be endowed with very fine powers of imagination. Now this seems to me to be a mistake, and the truth to be that the rustic imaginative faculty is, and has always been, but moderately developed. Physiologists teach us that the action of a man's brain is governed by physical laws, over which he has really no control, and that his powers are limited in all directions. Now I put it as a proposition worth examining, that *the limits of human imagination are conterminous with the bounds of human experience*. Of poetic *afflatus* the ordinary story-teller has only a small share. A mediæval version of the story of Tristram and the

etherealized legend of Lord Tennyson are two very different things ; and what the credulous do in practice, when getting up a legend, is to allow their imaginations to exaggerate what they have either seen or heard about, *i.e.*, experienced. The themes are always set them, as it were : they merely concoct the variations. Whatever they do, they do unconsciously, and it is nearer to scientific truth to say that all Folk-lore is a growth, than to hold that its ideas are the product of the inventive genius of untutored man. The *Pedigree of the Devil* is a book, followed quite lately by a *History of Monsters*, which takes up the line of argument, that constructive demonology generally is really due to the survival of memories of creatures that have existed on earth within the ken of man, though not within historical times. There is much more in this than would at first appear, and the theory, being capable of inductive demonstration, is therefore worthy of being looked into.

The upshot of the above remarks is that the historical method of investigation as regards Folk-lore is scientific, because it is safe ; and that it is unsafe to assume for the purposes of argument that imagination is an unlimited quantity. Those who follow the historical method cannot be charged with quackery, for they must at least know what they are about at every step ; and believe me, the more matter-of-fact an argument is, and the less room it allows for the play of emotion, the less scope is there for error and the more it convinces. I crave your pardon for thus pressing *the value of the historical method* on your attention. I do so because it seems to me that the tendency of those who have preceded me on this subject is to be content with mere comparison as a basis for their explanation of the phenomena of Folk-lore. What I would strongly urge is that we should remember that the world of which we have human record is so old that all things—even those which appear to us as primitive—must have a history, and that *before we compare we should, so far as we are able, ascertain that we are historically justified in making the comparison.* A certain custom exists in Holland, and its counterpart in India. Query : Are they connected at all, and, if so, which springs from the other ? I would say that, first, the history of each in its own country should be examined, until we come to the point when it can be proved

that there was a contact between the peoples of Holland and India : then that research should go on to see if in both lands the custom is traceable beyond the point of contact. If so, simple comparison is useless. If it only makes its appearance for the first time in one of them after the point of contact, the process of derivation can be continued on sound principles. This mode of investigation has been so effectively used in such books as the Philological Society's *English Dictionary* and Yule's *Glossary* above mentioned, that I would earnestly recommend it to your notice.

There is one thing more that *savans* will demand of the Science of Folk-lore. It must have a definite object, and occupy a definite place in the category of sciences. On this point I will, with your leave, repeat what I have already said elsewhere, which is this : "The wide term anthropology covers all the subjects, from the examination of which we are led to grasp the details of that complicated structure--the modern human being in his mental and physical aspects. Folk-lore is, or at least should be, one of these subjects. Just as physiologists are enabled by a minute and exact examination of skulls or teeth or hair, and so on, to differentiate or connect the various races of mankind, so should Folk-lorists, as in time I have no doubt they will, be able to provide reliable data towards a true explanation of the reasons why particular peoples are mentally what they are found to be. Folk-lore then, as a scientific study, has a specific object, and occupies a specific place."

In short, let it be clearly understood that Folk-lorists know what they are driving at, and that they moreover know how to set about their business, and they may take it for granted that there will not be much difficulty in procuring a general acceptance of the view that Folk-lore is a science.

Great as the temptation is, I will make no attempt on this occasion to enter into the examination of the various branches of the general subject of Folk-lore, or to discuss the proper method of conducting the inquiry into such matters as folk-tales, superstitions, customs, &c., partly because the time at my disposal will by no means admit of it, and partly because it seems that what we have to settle now are general principles. The exact manner of application of these will of

course have to vary with the circumstances of the several branches, but whatever be the system we adopt, it will have to be continued throughout all our researches, wheresoever they may carry us.

Doubtless some will be found to assert that after all there is nothing much in the shape of practical advantage to be got out of Folk-lore, however scientifically studied. To refute in advance any such argument, I have this evening brought with me a book, which will be new to most people in England, and to which I would draw special attention. It is called *Notes on the Spirit Basis of Belief and Custom*, and is being produced by the Bombay Government, under the guidance of Mr. James Campbell, the able editor of the official Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency. It is, you will perceive, a big book, and consists, indeed, of 510 foolscap pages, printed on half margin for a particular reason—for it purports to be only the rough draft of a summary of the chief details of the customs of the population of Bombay, and the blank margin is intended for the additions of those to whom it is circulated for information. Rough, incomplete, and imperfect as it professes to be, it is by far the best exposition of Indian Folk-lore that has yet been compiled. The treatment of the subject is throughout systematic, the theory is built up out of the facts accumulated, and each item is made to occupy its natural position in the structure. The introduction opens with the words: “In most cases the known and open object of the nurse and wise woman, *i.e.*, the private element in Indian family rites, is spirit-scaring.” In perusing the pages that follow, one cannot help feeling that, though they stand first, these words were written last, and thus it ought always to be in works purporting to be scientific. The best impression a writer on science can convey to his readers is that his theory is the outcome of the study of the facts he has brought together. I have been so much struck with the method pursued by Mr. Campbell in supporting his theory that I have had the tabular statement of it, and also his table of contents, with suitable modifications, printed for circulation to-night. From these you will see that he has covered a considerable portion of the whole field of Folk-lore, and how readily his facts fall into their allotted places. Now, Mr. Campbell says in his preface that his notes were prepared “to show the natives of India how early and how wide-

spread are the ideas which form the basis and which show the meaning of Indian nursery rites and old wives' cures," and he goes on to say : " These practices and beliefs are found close under the surface in all nations, however high their religion and refined their culture. They have the great interest and value of being survivals of often the only traces of forefathers as rude and hard pressed as the wildest tribes now on earth. *Like present wild tribes, the ancestors of all nations had practices coarse and strange, but always sensible, based on the experience of what had stood them in greatest stead in their ceaseless and uphill fight with disease and death.*" These are weighty words, and show the every-day practical value of such researches as the writer's. I have no hesitation in saying that to us Englishmen such studies are not only practical, but they are in some respects of the first importance. The practices and beliefs included under the general head of Folk-lore make up the daily life of the natives of our great dependency, control their feelings, and underlie many of their actions. We foreigners cannot hope to understand them rightly unless we deeply study them, and it must be remembered that close acquaintance and a right understanding begets sympathy, and sympathy begets good government; and who is there to say that a scientific study which promotes this, and, indeed, to some extent renders it possible, is not a practical one?

In running over the various efforts already made by this Society to erect the study of Folk-lore into a Science, it may seem to some that the above remarks have come rather late in the day; but I have been emboldened to make them, as those members, who have a practical experience of the study, have, as I gather, been directly invited to communicate their individual notions. Soon after its formation the Folk-Lore Society began to take a scientific view of its subject, though it hardly seems to have been founded with that idea. There are no signs of any but a literary and antiquarian interest in Folk-lore in Mr. Thoms's preface to the first volume of the *Record*; but Mr. Ralston in the same volume draws attention to a system of classification and nomenclature of folk-tales, and the Council commenced on the bibliography of Folk-lore and the indexing of Folk-lore books.

Nothing much has since been done as to the third of these points, but the first two have been considerably developed. In their first Report, too, the Council began to define the word "Folk-lore," and to talk of the "Science"; but their statement of the work that the Society proposed to itself was still mainly confined to the collection of materials. Mr. Lang, however, devoted his preface to the second volume of the *Record* mostly to the "Science of Folk-lore," and what was to be expected of it; and the following year saw Mr. Nutt's translation of Sébillot's scheme of classification, and its issue to members in pamphlet form. At the same time Mr. Lang suggested the systematic classification of Proverbs, and a committee was formed for this purpose. The fourth volume was enriched by Mr. Nutt's "Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula," with the valuable chart attached, which led to a very important result in the formation of the Folk-Tale Committee. The fifth and last volume contained the Report of this committee, which included the system of tabulating Folk-tales since found so useful; and the Annual Report of the Council, published at the same time, showed how the Society's work was progressing from the collection of materials to the consideration of the same, it being no longer possible to restrict its work to its original sphere. We now come to the *Folk-Lore Journal*, and by the time the second volume is reached we find the scientific study of Folk-lore already developed into a branch of anthropological science; and at p. 285 is Mr. Gomme's note on "Folk-lore Terminology," which, especially since he followed it up with the wish that it should be settled once for all that Folk-lore is a science, has led to that long subsequent discussion on the Science of Folk-lore, to which the present paper is intended as a contribution. As far as I can make out, the various writers who have joined in it have attempted to define the scope of the new science, and also to develop a scheme for the study of it. It is further clear, from what they have said, that each scheme of study put forth has depended on the definition that preceded it. The result of the friendly controversy which has thus been carried on is in effect this: we have before us several separate definitions of the word "Folk-lore," and several distinct plans for studying it, each of which

implies criticism of the others. When invited, therefore, to state my views, I could have expressed them by criticising those that have preceded me; but that would have made me an arbiter of the discussion, a position I have no right to assume: and I trust I have not done wrongly in increasing the materials for the controversy instead of following such a course. It seems to me that the questions of the correct definition and the right plan can only be settled satisfactorily in committee, and will never be set at rest by any individual reasoner. I have also perceived that the terms by which it has been proposed to name the divisions of each scheme arose out of the scheme itself, so that we have already a large number of sub-titles, mostly combined with the word "folk," for the minor branches of our study, the greater number of which must perforce be eventually discarded; so I have avoided adding to the number of the still-born, and have above confined myself to general principles when discussing the proper method of procedure.

Besides the above-mentioned efforts to directly advance the development of Folk-lore into a Science, several articles have appeared both in the *Record* and in the *Journal* which have largely contributed towards it. Among these I would mention Mr. Cootes' on the "Neo-Latin Fay" and on "Catskin," and Mr. Lang's "Anthropology and the Vêdas," as emphasizing much that I have just advanced as to the value of historical treatment. Mr. Clodd's "Philosophy of Punchkin" is also valuable as drawing attention to the usefulness of periodically taking stock of the materials to hand; and Mr. Fenton on "Folk-lore as an aid to Education" proves that at least one practical result of no small consequence is to be got out of the Science.

The formation of a Folk-lore Library has, I see, been more than once mooted, but nothing much has come of the idea. I suggest that *a Museum as well as a Library* would be of immense advantage to students, though for either we must find a fixed habitation—a matter we have not so far been able to accomplish for ourselves. Would it not be possible to start a scheme of donations for both these objects in cash or kind, trusting to subscriptions in the future for maintenance? We have the example of that oldest of all Oriental

Societies—the Asiatic Society of Bengal—for our encouragement in this respect. Its Museum and Library were both commenced and kept going when its funds were very low and its members far fewer than ours are now; yet the Museum grew to be valuable enough to be taken over by the Government of India as a nucleus for the present splendid Indian Museum at Calcutta, and its Library into the fine collection of books it now possesses.

A word as to general terminology. “Folk-lore” is a fine English compound, but we are sadly in want of an alternative, if only for the sake of useful and necessary derivatives. “Folk-lorist” and “Folk-loric” are not pleasant forms, but we have been long ago driven to use both. I would suggest some such classically-formed synonym as *demology*, *demosophy* or *demonomy*,—the last for choice—capable of easy development into passable derivatives as being of practical use. *Dogma* has been appropriated already by religious disputants, or *dogmology* might answer, and *demodogmology* is rather long. *Dokeology* and *dokesiology*, as the study of fanciful opinions, might do, if we are careful to preserve the original *k* to prevent mispronunciation, for “doce-ology” would be dreadful. *Doxology* would answer exactly, if it had not been long ago, even in Greek, given a specialized meaning. *Demology* might also be objected to for a similar reason. Anyhow, I hope some convenient term will be before long devised to meet the emergency.

And now, in thanking you for having patiently listened to this exposition of my views, I take occasion to repeat that I have no desire to dogmatize; and that I have given my discourse the particular turn it has taken, because I understand it to be still desired that contributions be made towards the definition of the term “Folk-lore,” and towards the settlement of the principles on which the Science of Folk-lore should be conducted, in order that it may become, what we must all wish it to be, a Science in something more than name.

R. C. TEMPLE.

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SPIRIT BASIS OF BELIEF AND CUSTOM.







